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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-first session

Summary record of the 1319th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 15 July 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Croatia (CEDAW/C/HRV/4-5; CEDAW/C/HRV/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Croatia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia), introducing the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Croatia (CEDAW/C/HRV/4-5), said that the Office for Gender Equality, which was responsible for preparing and disseminating documents relating to international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had coordinated the preparation of the country's periodic report and replies to the Committee's list of issues. The promotion of the Convention and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been included as a separate objective in the National Policy for Gender Equality. Copies of the text of the Convention and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been distributed to all relevant stakeholders working in the area of gender equality. The process of acceding to the European Union and the global economic crisis and subsequent recession had influenced the course of implementation of the policy. The Government had identified a need to expand the existing institutional framework to ensure effective implementation of the relevant laws and the policy in question. More human and financial resources were to be allocated to the Office for Gender Equality to enable it to achieve the objectives set out in the Gender Equality Act. During the negotiations leading up the country's accession to the European Union, all laws on gender equality had been aligned with the European Union acquis. The alignment process had been completed by the adoption of the Gender Equality Act in 2008. The Act promoted gender equality as a fundamental constitutional principle, provided protection against gender-based discrimination and aimed to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of society. The definition of gender-based discrimination in the Act mirrored that contained in the Convention. The Anti-Discrimination Act, which had come into force in 2008, also prohibited gender-based discrimination.

3. The achievement of gender equality still faced a number of critical challenges that required coordinated action, including the high prevalence of violence against women, gender inequality in the labour market and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes. The National Policy for Gender Equality served as the basic strategic document guiding the Government's efforts in the area of gender equality and was revised by Parliament every five years. The policy's key areas of action included promoting human rights and gender equality; creating equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market; mainstreaming gender-sensitive education and training; achieving gender balance in public and political decision-making processes; and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. The Committee's concluding observations from 2005 had been incorporated into previous national policies as priority objectives and measures. The Office for Gender Equality submitted a comprehensive report on the implementation of the National Policy for Gender Equality to the Government every two years. The previous report had shown that most of the measures provided for in the policy had been implemented within the established deadlines.

4. The Government had organized numerous conferences, seminars, workshops and campaigns with the aim of curbing violence against women. A number of strategies to combat domestic violence had been adopted and a new law on protection against

domestic violence was being prepared. The Criminal Code had recently been amended to characterize domestic violence as a specific criminal offence, as opposed to a misdemeanour. Moreover, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Code had been aligned with European Union Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. In March 2015, Parliament had adopted the Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War, which defined sexual violence in the Homeland War and set out the rights of the victims of that form of violence. Since 2013, the Office for Gender Equality, in cooperation with two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), had been conducting a campaign to raise awareness of the unacceptability of any form of violence against women and girls. The Croatian-language edition of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, signed by Croatia in 2013, had been disseminated as part of that campaign.

5. In January 2015, Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović had become the first female President of Croatia after having held various high-level ministerial and diplomatic positions. Moreover, the President of the Constitutional Court of Croatia was also a woman. In 2014, women had accounted for 45 per cent of the Croatian members elected to the European Parliament. Currently, 26 per cent of the members of the national Parliament were women. In the current Government, both deputy prime ministers were women, and 20 per cent of all ministers were women. The Local Elections Act of 2012 obliged political parties to respect the minimum quota of 40 per cent representation of either gender on electoral lists, as prescribed by the Gender Equality Act. In that connection, the new Act amending the procedures for electing members of Parliament provided that electoral lists that failed to meet the minimum quota would be declared invalid. However, despite the progress made in that area, the low level of female representation within local government remained a major cause for concern.

6. Employment remained a serious problem for women in Croatia. The gender pay gap stood at about 10 per cent but the majority of women tended to perform lower-paid jobs. Women were also more exposed to discrimination when seeking work and in the workplace, including gender stereotyping. Many women were unable to break through the glass ceiling in the area of professional advancement. In an attempt to address those challenges, the Government had launched a number of projects aimed at strengthening the position of women in the labour market, including through a special strategy to develop female entrepreneurship covering the period 2014-2020. Furthermore, the Croatian Employment Service had introduced a special package of measures targeting women in 2015.

7. The gender perspective had been incorporated into all foreign policy activities relating to the country's participation in international and regional organizations and forums and to development aid. In 2016, Croatia would assume the chairmanship of the Equal Futures Partnership, which had been set up by the United States in 2012 as a forum for exchanging best practices for the empowerment of women. Croatia supported the inclusion of gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

Articles 1 to 6

8. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that it was unfortunate that the State party's report, due in 2009, had not been received until 2013 and that it covered only the period up to 2010, thereby complicating the Committee's task of reviewing Croatia's implementation of the Convention. Although the Committee appreciated the impressive scope of the new laws and programmes adopted to promote gender equality and protect women's rights, it still had some concerns about their effective

implementation. The growing influence of the Catholic Church and other social forces in a country that declared itself to be a secular State, and the fact that their objectives were often at odds with the purpose and principles of the Convention, were a major cause for concern. She asked how the State party ensured that the agreements that it had concluded with the Holy See did not infringe women's rights or limit the measures taken to protect them.

9. Noting that Croatia had a monist legal system, she had been surprised to find no examples, in the report or the replies to the Committee's list of issues, of case law in which the Convention and/or the Optional Protocol had been directly invoked and applied by the national courts. The Committee was concerned that the absence of such information could be indicative of the lack of visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol in the State party or the lack of importance attached thereto. She asked whether those instruments and the Committee's general recommendations had been translated into Croatian and disseminated accordingly, and whether the courses offered by university law faculties referred to the Committee's jurisprudence. She requested additional information on the mechanisms for enforcing the Anti-Discrimination Act and on the penalties prescribed for acts of discrimination. Lastly, she wished to know whether the Gender Equality Act covered discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

10. **Ms. Ameline** said that the Committee welcomed the State party's efforts to consolidate its existing legal arsenal with a view to combating gender-based discrimination more effectively. Efforts should now be directed to ensuring compliance with those instruments.

11. She noted with satisfaction that the State party had taken several measures to assist women who had fallen victim to sexual violence during the Homeland War, which included the adoption of the Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War. However, the Committee had received reports that only a few hundred of the thousands of women who had suffered sexual violence had benefited from those measures; that the Act provided only limited access to justice and redress; that the procedure for obtaining redress was long and cumbersome; and that the definition of sexual violence contained in the Act was too vague. She asked how the State party planned to remedy those shortcomings, guarantee access to justice for all the women who had fallen victim to sexual violence during the Homeland War, and deal with the situation of impunity with regard to that crime. She also wished to know how the State party ensured that women's needs were taken into account when rehousing Croatian refugees and reintegrating them into Croatian society and the labour market.

12. The recent expansion of women's networks in Croatia was an encouraging development. She asked whether the State party planned to strengthen its links with such networks and other civil society organizations and involve them in its efforts to provide support and redress to women who had suffered sexual violence during the conflict. Did the State party intend to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)? How were the efforts of the different national human rights institutions coordinated? Did Parliament play a role in removing discriminatory provisions such as that relating to double arrest from the Criminal Code?

13. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia) confirmed that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations had been translated into Croatian and disseminated to all relevant stakeholders working in the area of gender equality. A number of conferences had also been held to mark key anniversaries in relation to the Convention. The National Policy for Gender Equality for the period 2011-2015 had been translated into English and notified to the Committee. The overview of the most recent legislative

and policy developments in the areas of gender equality and women's rights in Croatia, as set out in the delegation's opening statement, complemented the information contained in the periodic report. The delay in submitting the periodic report was primarily attributable to the increased workload of the Office for Gender Equality during the process of accession to the European Union, and the considerable resources that it had been necessary to devote to meeting other international reporting obligations. Croatia would endeavour to submit reports in a more timely fashion in the future.

14. In response to the question concerning the influence of the Catholic Church on legislation, she said that Croatia was a secular country and that, although the Church was allowed to express its views on draft legislation, laws were ultimately adopted by Parliament. For example, Croatia had adopted the Anti-Discrimination Act, despite the Church's opposition to the inclusion of provisions on gender identity, as well as the Same-Sex Civil Union Act, which had been welcomed by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Moreover, several years earlier, a court had ruled that a lesbian couple could adopt children.

15. With regard to women victims of rape, the recently adopted Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War referred to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Istanbul Convention and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and provided for legal, psychological and financial assistance to victims. There was an association of women who had suffered sexual violence during the Homeland War, but it was difficult to establish accurate data on the number of victims, as many were reluctant to come forward or discuss their experiences.

16. The Office for Gender Equality and various NGOs advocated the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which Croatia had signed in 2009. The Convention had been translated into Croatian and widely distributed in the country, and its ratification was under consideration.

17. Croatia had a parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality and an Ombudsman for Gender Equality who submitted reports to Parliament. Following the achievement of de jure equality, the focus had shifted to de facto equality.

18. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that the general recommendations of the Committee should be translated and disseminated and asked whether law students received training in the Convention. Noting that the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) covered the period 2011-2014, she asked whether the action plan would be renewed. She stressed the importance of involving civil society in the preparation of the State party's periodic reports.

19. **Ms. Ameline** said that the State party should indicate whether it planned to incorporate gender issues in its policies concerning refugees and should provide information on the situation of Roma women.

20. **Ms. Acar** asked whether the delegation could provide the Committee with a time frame for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

21. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia) said that while ratification of the Istanbul Convention was being considered, she could not provide the Committee with a specific time frame. In response to Ms. Halperin-Kaddari's questions, she said that while the Committee's general recommendations had not been translated into Croatian, a translation of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women had been issued. Moreover, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) would be renewed. The Office for Gender Equality was working with civil society on a number of projects,

and representatives of NGOs were involved in the drafting of gender-related legislation and strategies. However, NGOs had not participated in the preparation of the State party's report, given that it was a government report and NGOs were submitting shadow reports.

22. **Ms. Stanić-Šajatović** (Croatia) said that, under the Aliens Act, Croatian refugees who returned to Croatia did not have to meet the same legal requirements as other foreigners. Returning Croatians simply needed to be in possession of a valid passport and establish that they were returning to Croatia with the intention of permanently residing there.

23. **Mr. Sočanac** (Croatia) said that the Croatian Constitution recognized 22 national minorities. Eight members of Parliament were from national minorities, but none of them were women. One of the goals under the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2013-2020 was for every Roma child to complete his or her primary education, and every effort was made to prevent Roma girls from marrying at an early age and dropping out of the school. The Government planned to organize a public round table focusing on Roma women and children. Lastly, the "Living Life Free of Violence" campaign had held 10 interactive workshops with the participation of more than 500 primary school pupils.

24. **Ms. Haidar** said that Croatia had excellent legislation and now must focus on strengthening its national machinery to ensure implementation of the Convention. While the mechanisms in place demonstrated vision, they lacked resources. For example, the Office for Gender Equality had only five staff members, and its budget had been reduced as a result of the financial crisis. Were there any plans to seek additional funding for initiatives or to expand training for staff? The European Union might be able to fund some projects, and the United Nations could assist with capacity-building. What mechanisms were in place to ensure horizontal and vertical coordination among the various components of the national machinery? What steps were being taken to improve data collection and analysis?

25. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, referring to the written replies of Croatia to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/HRV/Q/4-5/Add.1), said that maternity and parental benefits did not constitute temporary special measures under the Convention. The Committee's general recommendations Nos. 24 and 28 explained the concepts of substantive equality and temporary special measures, and maternity and parental benefits fell under substantive equality. The State party should indicate whether temporary special measures were being applied in areas such as education and employment.

26. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia), referring to the questions from Ms. Haidar, said that the lack of financial and human resources posed a significant challenge to the Office for Gender Equality, given that it was responsible for, inter alia, preparing international reports, developing strategies and coordinating 21 county gender equality commissions. The Office had applied for additional funding from the European Commission and had received 160,000 euros for the "My Voice against Violence" campaign.

27. The Office for Gender Equality collected data from county gender equality commissions; the latter adopted their own action plans, but many of them suffered from a lack of funding.

28. The Government had conducted its first opinion poll on gender equality, the results of which were a mandatory subject in university curricula and had been publicized in neighbouring countries. The poll itself was an important means of raising awareness of gender inequality and initiating debate in society. The results were used as a scientific basis for drafting relevant national strategies and they also revealed that the majority of Croats were not sufficiently familiar with existing anti-

discrimination laws, which might explain the low number of complaints received in that regard. Furthermore, on the basis of the results of the poll, the Government had tendered for NGO support in projects aimed at implementing the Gender Equality Act in rural areas. The media had an important role to play in raising awareness of gender-focused legislation and the Government was committed to continuing its media campaigns in that respect.

29. In the area of entrepreneurship, temporary special measures had been in place for more than 10 years. The Gender Equality Act had also introduced 40 per cent obligatory quotas for women's participation in all political parties. Under the Act, political parties were subject to sanctions if their proposed lists of candidates did not meet the above-mentioned quotas, which would ultimately increase the number of women in Parliament.

30. **Ms. Alerić** (Croatia) said that a revised package of temporary special measures had been introduced in the field of employment as of the previous year, which targeted particular groups of women. Following an evaluation in two years' time, the measures would be adapted accordingly. Moreover, in order to promote women's employment, the Government consulted with women who had been unemployed for a significant period of time both on an individual basis and through workshops that prepared them for the labour market.

31. **Ms. Haidar** said that, in order to remedy the lack of funding, the knowledge and skills of county-level and city-level staff needed to be strengthened. She asked how much executive authority the Office for Gender Equality exercised and what it was doing to compensate for the lack of financial resources.

32. **Ms. Acar** said that the State party had introduced a temporary special measure between 2012 and 2013 to promote equality in secondary education by adding two points to the entry score of all girls. She wondered why the measure had been withdrawn for the academic year 2013/14 and noted that, unless a reasonable amount of time was afforded for the implementation of temporary special measures, positive results could not be expected.

33. **Ms. Jurela Jarak** (Croatia) said that the temporary special measure pertaining to secondary education had been withdrawn because consultations with pupils and school principals had revealed its ineffectiveness.

34. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia) said that, in the area of education, Croatia suffered from gender segregation as boys, unlike girls, tended to be sent to vocational secondary schools, which undoubtedly had implications for tertiary education choices, ultimately leading to further gender segregation in the labour market. That was why the Government had conducted several campaigns aimed at bridging the gender divide in education and employment. As for the authority of the Office for Gender Equality, she said that it was responsible for drafting strategies on gender equality, introducing amendments to existing legislation in that field, ensuring that laws used gender-sensitive language, approving action plans from various ministries, conducting public campaigns such as the one to increase the participation of women in politics, and ensuring that the State Electoral Commission provided gender-disaggregated statistics for all electoral processes.

35. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, referring to the issue of domestic violence, said that she wished to know whether the State party was implementing the comprehensive set of recommendations issued by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women following her visit to Croatia in 2011. Furthermore, the growing trend towards gender neutrality among European countries was particularly evident in Croatia, where dual arrests were common. That meant that victims of violence were often arrested alongside offenders because psychological violence was placed on a par with physical

violence. The law should differentiate between forms of violence and law enforcement officers should be trained to identify the primary aggressor and not to arrest the victim. She wondered why NGOs were prevented from offering assistance in that regard and whether the Government was planning to introduce appropriate measures.

36. She further wished to know whether the State party had considered adopting measures that would enable women to seek urgent protection in cases of domestic violence through civil channels, leaving the way open for subsequent criminal prosecution of offenders. She asked whether the Government had taken steps to increase the number of shelters available for victims of domestic violence, which currently stood at 20 per cent below the minimum set by the European Union. Finally, she wondered why the minimum sentence for rape had been reduced from 3 years to 1 year, and why the offence of sexual intercourse without consent, which carried a minimum sentence of 6 months' imprisonment, had been introduced in the Criminal Code.

37. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that, despite the State party's commendable efforts to eliminate stereotypes in the media and advertising, the 2012 report of the Ombudsman for Gender Equality highlighted the fact that stereotypes continued to exist and women continued to be sexually objectified. She would appreciate updated information on measures taken to eliminate gender stereotypes in the media, as well as information on steps taken and sanctions imposed by the Ombudsman for Gender Equality to resolve complaints pertaining to discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation in the media.

38. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she wished to know why some State bodies focusing on the prevention of human trafficking had been merged with other human rights entities. Furthermore, trafficking offenders were frequently charged under laws on prostitution rather than trafficking. Therefore, the Government needed to take proactive measures to ensure that law enforcement officials were fully aware of existing human trafficking laws and did not confuse them with laws on prostitution. Information was also needed on measures taken to identify trafficking victims among the most vulnerable groups in society, such as asylum seekers and the Roma population. Comments on the number of shelters available for trafficking victims would be appreciated, as would comments on reports that the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth did not have adequately trained social workers to help such victims. As for foreign victims of trafficking, she wondered whether their access to psychological support, legal aid and temporary stay in the State party was dependent on their willingness to assist in the prosecution of alleged offenders. Finally, she noted that the annual data collected on victims of trafficking was not consistent in terms of disaggregation.

39. With regard to prostitution, the sanctions handed down were frequently harsher for prostitutes than for their clients. She asked whether the Government had taken steps to assist women to abandon prostitution, such as by offering counselling, schooling or vocational training, and whether efforts had been undertaken to reduce the demand for prostitutes. She recommended that the delegation consider the Nordic approach to the issue of prostitution, which criminalized the demand for prostitution and not the prostitutes themselves.

40. **Ms. Poljarević** (Croatia) said that procedures had begun very recently to draft a new act on protection against domestic violence. A working group had been established by the Ministry of Justice for that purpose, consisting of judges, lawyers and police officers. The definition of domestic violence had been broadened to include psychological and economic violence, as well as physical violence. In each individual case, it was the responsibility of the judge to determine the penalty within the sentencing limits set by national regulations.

41. **Ms. Kodrić** (Croatia) said that dual arrests were not regulated by law and took place only in isolated cases. There were cases in which both partners were perpetrators of domestic violence and, even if the violence committed by one party to the conflict differed in nature or intensity from the violence committed by the other party, the police were obliged to report both and issue a penalty accordingly. Efforts had been undertaken to collect gender-disaggregated data on complaints of domestic violence heard by misdemeanour courts and such data were now available.

42. **Ms. Morosini Turčinović** (Croatia) said that Croatia had a network of shelters for victims of violence, administered by civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, and funded by the Government of Croatia. The shelters offered temporary housing, food, health care, and social and psychological treatment. The number of beneficiaries of the shelters was lower than capacity, and not all the allocated budget was spent. All victims that sought shelter were given shelter. Minimum standards had been adopted, along with guidelines for their implementation. Every care was taken to make victims of violence feel safe.

43. The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth continually provided various forms of training and education, aimed at strengthening services furnished by the shelters. Between 2013 and 2015, it had funded seven organizations that were managing eight shelters. Civil society organizations that ran shelters were required to provide counselling services, to inform victims of their rights, and to refer victims to other agencies, as necessary, in particular for assistance with their social reintegration.

44. The Ministry had participated in studies on the effectiveness of support services for victims of violence. The results had shown that those shelters effectively improved the psychological and physical security of victims, satisfied their basic needs, provided them with rest and recuperation, and enabled them to live a quality life after leaving the shelter.

45. **Ms. Kodrić** (Croatia) said that dual arrests — of both perpetrator and victim — had been the subject of many meetings held by the Ministry of the Interior, in which the Ombudsman, representatives of civil society organizations working on gender issues, and police officers had taken part.

46. Training offered at the Police Academy included the topics of domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against women and children. There were numerous courses and seminars for different police services, including border police, traffic police, police specialized in juvenile delinquency, and liaison officers. Emphasis was also placed on new methods used by traffickers, and the routes they used for moving victims. The police cooperated with public prosecutors and courts , as well as with non-governmental and civil society organizations.

47. In addition, non-governmental organizations held seminars on human trafficking in secondary schools.

48. Starting in 2011, statistical data had been collected on victims of human trafficking, including data on sex, age and nationality. Under the terms of the Misdemeanour Act, prostitution was an offence against the public order and subject to fine or imprisonment. More recent legislation also stipulated that a person who used sexual services or who encouraged or arranged for sexual services would be prosecuted and punished.

49. The Ministry of the Interior had strengthened its relevant measures to combat the sex trade by monitoring night clubs, restaurants, and other places frequented by prostitutes.

50. Croatia and its neighbouring countries had been identified as countries of origin.

51. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia) pointed out that Croatia was still mostly a transit country.

52. **Mr. Sočanac** (Croatia) said that the Government of Croatia was working with the international community to combat human trafficking. It had signed the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; it also adhered to Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. In Croatia, many entities were involved in the suppression of human trafficking, including, inter alia, government ministries, the Croatian Red Cross, non-governmental organizations, and the International Organization for Migration. There was a national committee for the suppression of human trafficking, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, which met at least twice a year; the operational team, however, met monthly with representatives of ministries and non-governmental organizations. His own office was the secretariat for that process, and he served as the national coordinator. The regulatory framework was extensive; the first national plan to combat human trafficking had covered the period from 2002 to 2004, and the next phase would be from 2016 to 2019. Three protocols were in place, one for the identification, assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking, the second for procedures related to voluntary returns, and the third for the reintegration of victims. There were two official shelters in Croatia, one for adults, the other for children.

53. Special emphasis was placed on seminars and training sessions for target groups such as police officers, judicial officials, diplomatic and consular staff, health-care workers, social workers, persons working in the tourist industry, military and police staff involved in international missions, and media employees. Four media campaigns had been aimed at raising awareness of and suppressing human trafficking. One of those campaigns had targeted potential users of human trafficking services, under the slogan "Real men don't buy women".

54. In its efforts to combat trafficking, Croatia worked with the European Commission, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe, and in an informal network of national coordinators in South-Eastern Europe.

55. Turning to the matter of judicial proceedings, he said that victims of human trafficking were not treated as criminal offenders. In addition, the public prosecution services had been instructed not to prosecute a person on the basis of any criminal acts that he or she was forced to commit within the context of trafficking or as a direct result of trafficking or slavery.

56. A question had been asked about lenient sentences for perpetrators; great efforts were being made to educate judges as to the severity of the crime.

57. The Office for Human Rights worked incessantly to raise awareness among police officers, public prosecutors and judges about the realities of human trafficking. Recently, emphasis had been placed on teaching judges and prosecutors about the nature of the trauma caused by human trafficking and the implications of that trauma for the giving of testimony. The new Criminal Procedure Act accorded the victim special rights during a hearing, including the exclusion of the public, and the prohibition on questioning the victim about his or her personal life; testimony could also be taken at the victim's home or through an audio link. In the case of sexual assaults that occurred in the context of domestic violence or human trafficking, victims could only be questioned if necessary to prevent their secondary victimization.

58. The new Criminal Code differentiated between human trafficking and slavery; the basic definition of human trafficking, however, remained the same. The word

"helplessness" had been changed to "vulnerability". Penalties were in line with the provisions of Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament: perpetrators were sentenced to 1 to 10 years' imprisonment, or 3 to 15 years if the victim was a child.

59. It had been asserted that joining the Office for Human Rights with the Office for National Minorities had weakened their functions. That was not so. All previous functions had been maintained and the new Office had increased its activities.

60. Data contained in the report on the implementation of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings were presented in such a way as to protect the privacy of victims and prevent their secondary victimization.

61. Each year, the Government issued a call for proposals to finance non-governmental organizations working on those issues; in the period from 2010 to 2014, 100,000 euros had been allocated for that purpose. Shelters for victims were required to provide certain services, inter alia, they evaluated the condition and circumstances of each victim and drew a plan of assistance and care, adapted to individual needs. When the victim had no need of accommodation, the individual plan was drawn up by a social welfare centre. Victims were permitted to stay in the shelters for as long as they wished.

62. Most of the victims were women and girls, but some were also boys. Women, in particular, required emergency medical and gynaecological care, social and psychological treatment, and help with social reintegration.

63. **Ms. Štimac Radin** (Croatia) said that stereotypes portrayed in the media were a huge problem for which solutions had not yet been found. On the Internet, in particular, there had been a surge that it was impossible to curtail. The Office for Gender Equality had been working with television and radio stations, which had been asked to send yearly reports on the gender policy applied in their broadcasts. Efforts were also being made to educate journalists; women as well as men often lacked gender sensitivity.

64. An agency working on social pluralism was offering reward points to private radio and television stations for gender-sensitive programming; that measure had proven effective in both media, since local stations received funds for points earned.

65. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that the question she had raised about new provisions providing lighter sentences for rapists and perpetrators of sex crimes had not been answered. She would also appreciate clarification of the new provisions on common-law marriage under the legislation on protection against domestic violence, which made legal recognition dependent on a three-year relationship and on having children; in her view, that left some women unprotected. It would also be useful to know if there had been an increase in the number of protection measures for women.

66. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she understood the wish of the State party to abolish prostitution, but prostitutes should not be criminalized. She wished to know, in particular, if victims of human trafficking were required to collaborate with the police in order to remain in Croatia and receive assistance.

67. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she would appreciate information on the status of cases brought against private persons and non-governmental organizations for sexual stereotyping and discrimination in the media, and the sanctions that the Ombudsman was empowered to apply.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.